

SIDE STEPS WITH A THERA-BAND

This is almost the same exercise as Side Step Walking, except a Thera-Band provides additional resistance and participants only take one step each direction so they can stay in front of their chair for balance safety. This can be a tricky one to teach safely, so follow the instructions carefully.

Benefits »

- ⦿ Strengthens hip abductors.
- ⦿ Adds difficulty to Side Steps Walking.

Set It Up »

You will need a Thera-Band for each participant.

How to Do It »

The Start

- ⦿ Participants begin sitting down. Have them put the middle of the Thera-Band under both feet, stirrup style. They will hold the two ends on the outside of their knees, one end in each hand.
- ⦿ Ask them to stand up carefully while holding the ends of the bands. They can also keep the heel of their hand on the chair to give them help and balance.
- ⦿ Once they are up and comfortable, ask them to move back a bit until they feel their legs touch their chair. Let them know that touching the chair with their legs is a balance aid that will help them feel more stable.
- ⦿ Then have them step sideways toward one edge of the chair. Tell them that the width of their chair will be their stepping width. They will be stepping side to side in front of their chair.
- ⦿ Tell them that the chair is their back up balance safety plan—a place to sit should they lose their balance or get tired.
- ⦿ Cue them to stand tall: Knees soft, abs braced, ribs lifted, and shoulder blades back and down. Now they're ready to begin stepping.



The Moves

Start from one edge of the chair and side step to the other. Then bring the other foot beside the first. The band will provide resistance. Use the following cues.

- ⦿ Step, together, step from edge to edge of the chair.
- ⦿ Touch your chair with your legs. (Remind participants of this throughout the exercise so they always keep the chair behind them.)
- ⦿ Do 8 to 15 side steps in each direction.
- ⦿ Stand directly in front of your chair when finished, again with your legs touching it.
- ⦿ Let go of the band; just let it drop onto the floor.
- ⦿ Touch your chair, so you know where it is.
- ⦿ Now you can sit down.
- ⦿ Once you're seated and rested, pick up the band from the floor.

Take It Further »

- ⦿ Add a knee bend to each side step. As they step to the side, the stepping leg will bend and then straighten. Cue them, "Bend and straighten."
- ⦿ Tighten the band for greater resistance by flexing the arms at the elbows with each side step. Effectively it's a bicep curl done with a side step.

Give It More Balance »

If participants are well supervised, they can move away from the chair. While side stepping, they should keep their back to a wall for safety. Have them start with just a few steps in one direction, perhaps four to eight in each direction. Personally supervise this activity.

Keep It Safe »

Follow the directions for getting up and back down carefully. Watch that participants stay in front of the chair, just in case they lose their balance. Remind them to touch their chairs periodically and to sit if they need to. This activity should not be done with any participants who use walkers or canes since it requires both hands to hold the Thera-Band. Participants who cannot do this activity standing can do the seated version (see Seated Side Steps With a Thera-Band on page 158).